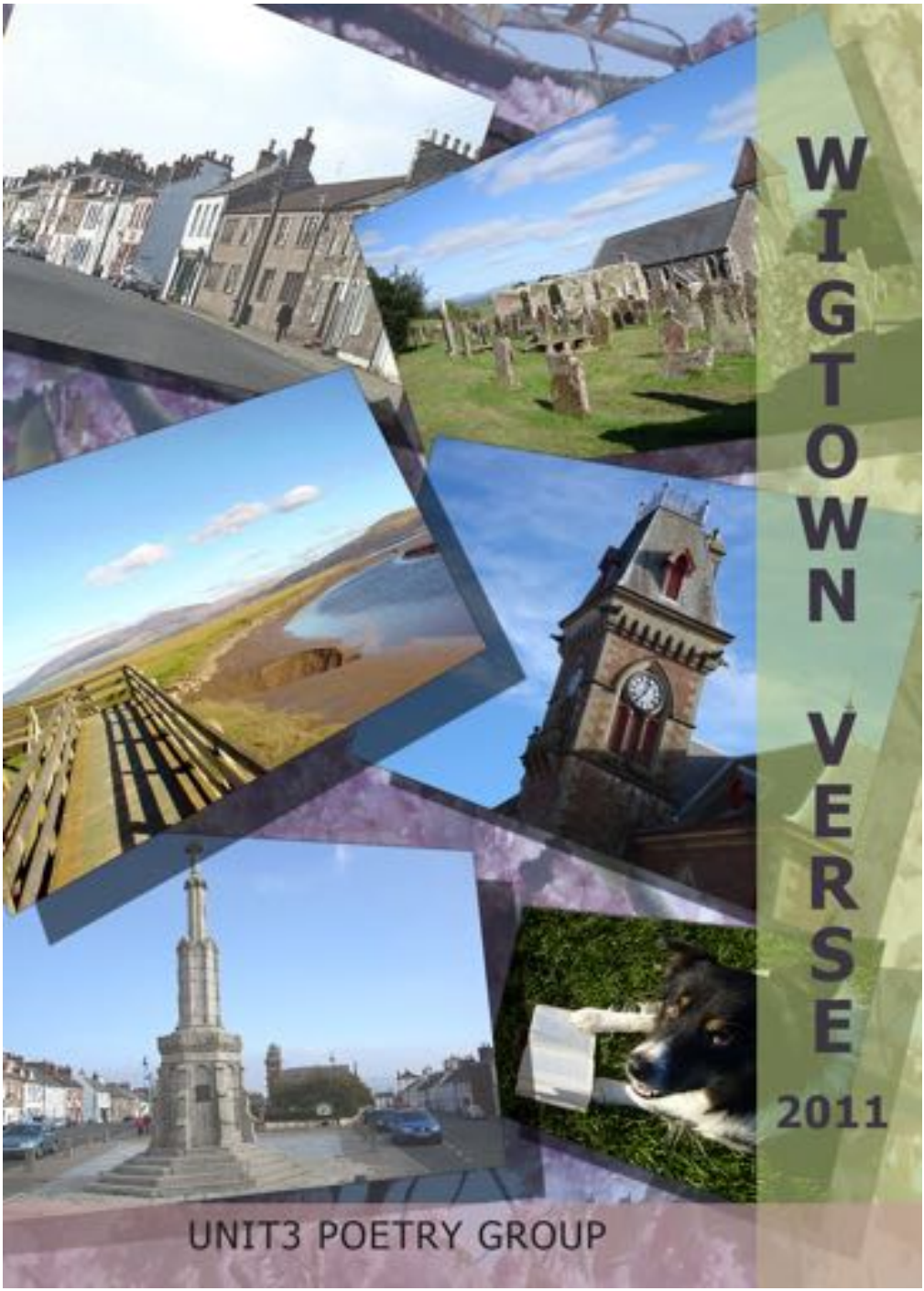

WIGTOWN VERSE

2011

UNIT3 POETRY GROUP



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The Poets

Joyce Adkin

Amy Baumann

Tony Brotherton

Bea Cumming

Elizabeth Duncann

Anne Dunford

Jenny Gustafson

Barbara Holland

Barbara J Jefferies

Helen Macdonald

Eileen Plumridge

Doreen Saunders

Di Sorrill

Janette Walkinshaw

Sonnet to the Inks

The full moon high tide is surging the bays
  Filling the grassy, deep grooved Inks' scours
Flushed with sea water, it's filling the maze
  And hiding the pastures' rough, tiny flowers.
Duck, gull and geese swim where once sheep could graze
  Flying and diving, swirling then resting
Seeking for food in the flooded grass ways.
  Passing bird pausing en route to the nesting,
Finding repose for the full flooded days
  Pale grey-green colours blending with sky,
Flickering gently in sun-hidden haze.
  Waves wash in shore with a hardly heard sigh.

Look for the spring in the soft feathered flight
  Faintly reflected in early spring light.

Di Sorrill

Parliament Hill

Where we were going or perhaps had been
I have forgotten, but we'd have come by bus
A long way from home, the grass hard and green
My parents young, tall and laughing
And kites flying on Parliament Hill

I was the only child still – and scared
Of the immensity of sky and silence.
A childhood day that could not be shared.
My parents young, tall and laughing.
Are kites still flying on Parliament Hill?

Eileen Plumridge

Angel of the Sky

Soaring high on waves of air
Wings of silence swift in flight
A feathered creature of the skies
Your earthly name we know as Kite
Sing your songs while ere you weave
On breath's sweet sigh and calling breeze
Hovering still in silent pause Sweet Angel of the sky
Whilst prey below the evident cause
From your airy perch now fly

Oh with ease, such grace defined
Ethereal spirit on the wing
Such gentleness in perfect rhyme
Just to watch you my heart sings
Breathless as I gaze in wonder
Beauteous sight my eyes behold
Angel of the cloudless heavens
Bathed in glorious sunlight gold
Shimmering swiftness calls to me,
Sovereign of the heavens of light
Oh sweet creation, how I love thee
Angel of the sky, the Kite

Bea Cumming

The Face at the Window

He was there again today –
Not doing anything.
Just there.
Darkly silent
On the other side of the glass.

He makes no move at all
But watches me.
No sound
Yet his eyes communicate with mine.

He was there again today,
Morning and evening
Wearing me down, willing me
To adopt a stray black cat.

Elizabeth Duncann

A Winter Sonnet

Hurrah for winter, here it comes

I rather like a stormy sky
'Gainst red and golden shouting leaf
With crunchy, crackling underneath,
And wild confetti hurtling by

To sound of wind and beating rain,
Meaty stews, rich puds I'll bake.
Comfort foods for comfort's sake,
No salad till it's spring again.

Close the curtains and build the fire,
A glass of wine and a box of chocs,
A gripping book and woolly socks,
To seventh heaven I'll retire.

Hurrah for winter, here it comes

E. Plumridge

Fire

Thrown from the car
The cigarette lay quiescent.
A little breeze
Drifting here and there
Played with the cigarette
As it lay cosily in the bracken.

Bracken crisp and curled
Like paper streamers
From a party
Long forgotten.

The breeze quickened
Caressed the bracken
Slipped between the parchment
Of the birches
Toyed with the faded heather
Played with the gaunt grasses
Standing stiffly
Beneath the pines.

A sudden gust pounced on the cigarette
The smouldering spark inside
Blossomed and grew
Into a monstrous flower.

The motorist, miles away
Neither knew, nor cared
That he'd destroyed
A living thing -
A forest.

Barbara Holland

On the Blue Saucer

Here is the breastbone of a bird
translucent, rigid, paper-thin,
outer surface silken to the fingers
inside rough with fine grains of sand
from a white beach in the Western Isles;
on each side tiny hollows and projections
from which once sprang the wings
that flexed and spread and folded,
bearing the bird with bold grace over the sea.

Here is a dull brown oval stone
not much bigger than my finger-pad,
crammed full of fossil remnants
like an intricately inlaid jewel;
smooth shapes of yellow-grey
slipping beneath the skin
in intricate profusion. It caught my eye
on some forgotten beach, a lovely thing
so tactile it returns one's caress.

Here like an empty seed-box
is the hard capsule that once enclosed
a minute sea-urchin, a little greenish ball
segmented by convex lines of Braille,
raised dots from which in life
the spines grew. Within,
the concave wall looks smooth,
but the holes at top and base
are too small for an exploring finger.

This is a piece of desert rose,
a complex fusion of grains of sand
compressed and sculpted by the winds of time
into an intricacy of stone
like crushed petals;

and this, a sand-dollar from America,
a milky-white internal shell
splayed in five broad pieces
bearing the scarce-tangible traces
of bodily connections;
and here a neat scallop-shell
memento of pilgrimage,
pleated in expanding folds
which ripple under one's thumb.

On the blue saucer lie other treasures:
bits of pottery, shell, bone, glass,
the delicate dried leaves
of a seedling grown from a stone
found in a slab of tamarind;
evidence of the enduring in the ephemeral -
even the two pearl buttons waiting
to be sewn on a discarded shirt.

Amy Baumann

Time

They say that time and tide wait for no man
They say that time will tell
They say the time will come

It may be true for some!

They say the time is now
They say that time has gone
They say the time will pass

Like some quite silly ass!

They say they'll bide their time
They say the time is now
They say that time stands still

I sometimes wish it will!

Di Sorrill

Landscapes in Winter and Spring

In wintertime the fields lie bleak and bare,
The earth is rigid underneath one's feet
The cattle's breath ascends in frosty air.

In hedgerows' shelter mice and voles compete
For scarce resources; only blackbirds sleek
And fieldfares, berry-sated, are replete.

Now the sky is criss-crossed with the streak
Of vapour trails snow-white against the blue
Whilst whistling wind chaps lips, makes glow the cheek.

The fox far off hears faint the 'view Halloo!'
And fleeing for his life before the pack
Loses his scent in water and runs through

The brake; no hounds now at his back
They've lost the trail and there's a hue and cry
Whilst Reynard gently lopes along the track.

Beneath the frozen pond fish dormant lie,
Seeing out the season comatose
Till spring returns and warmth revives the fly.

Now days are sunny and a warm breeze blows
New leaves burst forth, lambs frolic and grass grows,
Spring's urgency, then summer's sweet repose.

Tony Brotherton

A Cat Sleeps

Look at her!
She's found a patch of sunlight and made it hers.
Oblivious to the World around her, she has bedded down.
She squirmed and wriggled until the softy-turned, warm earth
Became a feather mattress moulded to her body.
Now, exhausted by her efforts, she sleeps.

Her tiny, white body is curled
Her head half tucked under and half twisted upwards.
Her front paws hands, drooping over her stomach.
Her one back leg has disappeared under her torso.
Softly,with each breath her body floats upwards to the sun
Then down again to earth.
For a few minutes she is still alert, her unhearing ears
gently twitching –
Catching what? For it's not sound teasing them.

Then the paws fall until they rest on the downy stomach.
The head lolls closer still to the loamy pillow beneath it
And the breathing drops to barely noticeable.
She's passed to the other world of peace and dreams;
Of birds and rabbits who actually allow themselves to be caught;
Of exquisite aromas from her favourite meals;
Of warm, dry, cosy places just for her alone;
And feather beds fit for princesses who can't tolerate peas.

The World goes on around her but for now she's not available.

I wish I could be like a cat: be in the world but not of it –
Just for a short time, at least – even just once every day.
Life would be more wonderful and precious, and easier
Knowing I could step out of it, and sleep like my cat.

Elizabeth Duncann

Freedom for Ghazi?

Now you have freedom.
Freedom from the cells
incarcerating you
not once, but twenty times.

Now you have freedom.
You are no longer a number,
no longer an asylum seeker,
people use your name.

Now you have freedom
but your body bears scars,
the signature of torture.
Your dreams imprison you.

Now you have freedom
but neighbours question,
abuse, tell you to return
to a land you don't come from.

Now you have freedom
but you can't return
to your mother and brothers,
to where your heart is.

Is this really freedom?
As long as we listen
you say, if we listen
then yes, you can hope.

Hope for the future
Hope for Palestine
Hope for peace.

Anne Dunford

The Pimpernel Garlic

I see it here, I see it there
I see garlic everywhere.
Is it from heaven or is it from hell?
That unforgiving pungent smell.

Is it a fruit that sits on a plate
Or a tiny vegetable we love to grate?
Is it the taste that holds fascination?
Or the power of the breath, and resulting stagnation.

To be fair to the power of the garlic seed
Its revolting presence is just what we need.
When someone whose presence we'd rather not know
We just guffaw with laughter and away they will go.

So here's to the garlic, long may it survive
And remain in my diet till I'm 105.
Is it from heaven… or is it from hell?
The elusive garlic pimpernel.

Bea Cumming

Garden of Remembrance

Will you remember me each time you gaze upon
The garden I gave thee?
Or will you move
And in doing obliterate the memory?

The hot hours spent, misspent?
Digging out tenacious woody shrubs
Long past their best
Replacing them with rare ones
Tenderly grown and given with love.

Dirt accumulating beneath my nails
While you celebrated at the wedding
The vision I had for your garden
Posts and rope enclosing it,
Creating a secret between us.

Essence of jasmine, rose and honeysuckle
An arbour we could sit beneath,
As we gazed at evening light shafting
On flowers of many hues
Dreaming of our future.

Bags of bright sulphur daffodils
Watered with tears, planted in pain
Knowing their Spring cheer would remain
Unseen by me but witnessed by thee
In your garden of remembrance.

Standing still, studying the scene,
The cat stretching his neck to be stroked
Relieved you're not here, I can contemplate
Looking upon my children with admiration,
I leave forever your garden of remembrance.

Jenny Gustafson

Crazy Computers

The madness of laptops surpasses all thought
Whoever sailed home to a parallel port?
Greek churches have an iconostasis-
But icons in laptops have no sacred basis.
Who plays cricket with an autoexec.bat?
And a CMOS function – just what is that?
The 'local bus'' doesn't stop near this house,
And whoever heard of a blue-toothed mouse?
Options there are, but no 'cache' on the line
And the floppy discs just jigger the spine.
And as you plough on it just gets worser
Until you make use of an expressive 'cursor'.
Those J-pegs don't hold clothes on the line
No megabyte eases this hunger of mine;
Pixels and software are not to my taste
Expansion slots might be good at the waist.
But files are no good for a quick manicure
And the bubble jet's flat, of that I am sure.
With ROM and RAM and old DTP,
With wild cards fighting, confusing me,
With inedible menus and some discs to burn
There's bios and chaos wherever you turn.
Headers and footers and hypertext links
Are much more stressful than anyone thinks.
So close the computer, let's not troubleshoot
Shut down illegally and give it the boot.

Barbara J. Jefferies

Volcano

The tales of Science Fiction
Oft have a dreadful time
With meteors landing in the sea
And changing the earth's good clime.

Well, what if one landed in Scotland?
In Dumfries and Galloway, then,
How would the people manage,
When it came with a splash in Loch Ken?

They'd get a good washout in Dumfries,
And maybe in Kirkcudbright, too
And the poor dear Loch Ken monster
Would have frightened his last – boo-hoo!

But the worst of the shock would be coastwise,
Over the top of the rise,
And the cloud-bolstered top of Cairnsmore
Would suddenly catch our eyes.

Instead of the misty morning cloud
Which so often looks like smoke,
Or like fire with the sun behind it
Would suddenly not be a joke.

With fire bursting out of the top
And lava running downhill
Into the quiet of Wigtown Bay
It could be quite a kill.

Still, it's only science fiction,
A bit of a laugh to go round.
Hey, wait for just a minute, though,
What was that horrible sound?

Di Sorrill

In the Transport Museum

I drove one of those trams
The fifty-two from Bishopbriggs to Cowglen.

Over the river, past the shipyards
Tea from the flask, a fag, and back again.

Secure in the rails, steady speed
Gentle steering, stop when needed.

Warn the folk that cross the lines
Safety in slowness, danger in silence.

Drift along and dream, of ships and fighter planes,
Mountains and monsoons.

And the lass who comes aboard at Springburn
Jumps down in Hope Street, with a backward smile.

The boy tugs at my hand
This child of my grandchild.

He does not see the trams.
He squeals around the racing cars.

The trams stand tall and silent under the glass roof
Lifted from their tracks, brought here to sleep.

My life was lived in tramlines.
Only the dreams flew free.

Janette Walkinshaw

I Thought I Saw You Today

I thought I saw you today:
From the top deck of the 41
I looked down through the streaming window,
Past the sheeting rain
To the street below.

And I thought I saw you today:
With your old beige mac
And your black beret glued by Brylcreem to
Your thinning hair
On the street below.

I thought I saw you today:
Trudging towards the cross –
Were you going to Aunty Dolly's without me?
To be with family
And off the wet streets.

I did see you today –
Though you are dead
And your ashes lie in your beloved garden –
And mum still tends it
But never speaks of her loss.

I saw you today
And I wept with the rain
And the streaming windows
At the paucity of my life
Now you are gone.

Elizabeth Duncann

Different Times

Why does it smell so different today?
Even when one of them gets into a bus
they wear the odour like a rancid skin,
a stale pervasion that offends the nose.
Yet once it seemed alive, provocative,
a whiff of moorland, gun-oil, smoky tweeds,
or city streets crackling with danger.
Meerschaum, church-warden, Rizla roll-ups –
even my father's pipe sleek with its oily residues
as he knocked out dottle on the grate
then stuffed the bowl with fresh-cut twist
black as thick liquorice –
all wafted up their aromatic haze.
And oh, the names, the fragrances!
Golden Virginia, with its hint of barnyard smell,
Woodbines, Weights, celestial Passing Clouds,
the bearded sailor on the Players' pack,
the butler proffering Kensitas.
Once in a way came oval Turkish tubes
redolent of the East, lingering, evocative;
or brown-wrapped *Gauloises* – breathe them down,
la vie en tabac – you could be in France!
and Spanish *Ideales* – with twiggy bits
in yellow paper, that crackled as you smoked.
Well, we know better now, or think we do,
and I can write these things and feel no urge to lapse;
but was that spicy, gamy, bonfire smell
utter illusion? Are our brains now programmed
to feel disgust – aversion therapy –
or have the manufacturers corrupted the weed
to enhance its shelf-life?
Whether a mini-skirted schoolgirl, a plump mum,
or sad old man sprawled on a public bench,
all smokers reek the same –
why does it smell so different today?

Amy Baumann

The Smile

When life is dull and gets you down, just stop and think awhile
That all it takes to lift the day is a bright and cheery smile.
There's many a time there's been a child,
who's known that he's done wrong.
A tear has laid upon his cheek and his head of curls bent down.
His heart is small and heavy, as he waits for Mum's sharp words
But the ticking of the clock upon the wall is all that's heard.
His mother holds her arms out, and calls quietly his name
And receives the promise from him, not to misbehave again.
And, as the sadness disappears from the little tear-stained face,
The sun shines brightly once again,
in the smile that takes its place.

Bea Cumming

Foula

Proudly you stand
Magnificent; alone in splendour
Isle of all Isles
Wild seas tear your feet
Thunder your cliffs
Gouge holes in your sides –
Proudly you stand
Isle of all Isles.
Winds demon-strengthened
Screech through your valleys
Torment your hills –
Still proudly you stand
Isle of all Isles.
Moon meets sun to light your beauty,
Soft in the magic of the simmer dim.
Winter moods darken your beauty,
Keeping daylight for warmer climes.
Birds cry, seals sing over and around you –
More proudly you stand.
Isle of all Isles.

Doreen Saunders

Who is She?

Is this beautiful young woman my daughter?
With such confidence, poise and grace?
Is it really the same little person
I cheered in the egg and spoon race?

Is this passionate politics student
With charisma, charm and style,
Is she really the same little person
I once carried for nearly a mile?

I watch as she talks to our guests
As if seeing her through a haze.
She bends, she laughs, she smiles, she chats –
When did she learn grown-up ways?

Is this polished young lady my daughter?
With her canapés, salmon and wine?
Then she turns and she winks at her mummy
And I know then for sure that she's mine!

(*Watching first-born at her first grown-up event*).

Elizabeth Duncann

Millennium Sea

I do not like the sea.
I know all about our Island Kingdom
Britannia rules the waves
And all that
But I still don't like it.
I fear it.
I am suspicious of it
And, for some reason if
I have to go near it
I stand on the highest cliff
For safety
And look down at the horrid mass
Below.

I see it gobbling and nibbling
Gnawing and grinding,
A metamorphosis of boulders
Into grainy sand.

But when it lies calm and still
That is when I fear it most
For beneath its seeming benevolence
What is it
That is crawling and slithering..?
Grazing on the seaweed meadows
Biding its time – waiting
To crawl onto the shore
And take over the land
As did its ancestors
Aeons ago.

Barbara Holland

Snowdrops

A dainty snowdrop, hidden, white
Beneath the snow on a winter night.

Perfect with its fragile form
Weathers the worst of a winter storm.

Roof slates slither and oak-trees fall,
The flower shivers by the shattered wall.

Beauty unnoticed on its own,
Flowers not meant to bloom alone.

Then February comes with not just one
But drifts of snowdrops in the sun.

Across the parkland's early green
The hopeful promise of spring is seen.

E. Plumridge

Gratitude in Gold

Tall mountains stand before me, in their glorious purple hue
Clothed in wondrous heather glory wet each morn with sparkling dew
At the dusk of day they shine their lilac glow while e'er we sleep
Protecting all with healing shade while gentle guard they keep
Fear not they seem to tell us for harm shan't come your way
Rest in peace the whole night through till you wake to new-born day

Around our town a vision bright as any can behold
When moon-glow shines across her silent water bed of gold
The sea so calm and blue; each wave comes slowly to our shores
While misty sprays of playful waves their soundless dreams explore
Gently whispering inner peace, she calls "I'll wash away your pain"
By morning they will be no more, and you can smile again

Tall forests green behind us stretch towards the cloud-strewn sky
Like soldiers on horizons waiting fearlessly to die
Walk among us, feel our strength and breathe the air we make
Our gift to you is pleasure; all we ask is that you take
Walk our paths of plenty, see the wonders nature brings
Kites on wing, squirrels at play, and little birds that sing

I catch my breath each morning at such glory I behold
Such wonder on my doorstep; gratitude in gold

Bea Cumming

Flow Down Thames

Dripping spring on Cotswold hillside,
Runnel down in muddy bed,
Past the berries
By the quarries,
Ripple gently underfoot.

Wander through the curling meadows,
Cattle wades in every bend.
Through the willows
Clipped and tidy,
Under pack-bridge, worn and red.

Noble Gothic buildings
Leave reflections in the wake.
Ancient shire
Old coach and horses,
Post-horn sounding glides away.

Sweeping down the valley nobly,
Into haunts of work and play.
Barges to the docks at Lechlade.
Chromium launches in their bay.

Bustling linen, immaculate flannels,
Intelligent banter in boats with picnics.
Gleaming spires and industrial waste
Cricket and punting and rowing in eights.

On into Reading, past pop bands and noise
Green lawns and swans, then trains and canal
Bridges and traffic, bustle and barges,
People all hurry, got work to do.
Mustn't stop, must go on, follow the river
Past houses and meadows, woods and walkways,
Bridges and townships, wider and wider.

In – out , in – out,

Flow to Henley and the diamond scull
Mechanical click of the eights in concert.
Old men in school caps and ladies in frills,
Strawberry teas by the fairground's noise
With cheers and applause for the toiling oars.

Naval precision by little boys,
Sculls in the air - white-blanched and chaste.
Elegant houseboats, luxurious mansions,
Rich and desirable, sad and neglected,
Curious remnants of bygone days,
Yet once more regaining their former glory,
Homes of commuting fast travellers each day.

Pass through Windsor, leave castle behind with
Eton and boys and kings and princes.
Widening, widening, shiny boats showing
Swans and water-birds how to swim
Not many fields now, broken-down buildings
Litter the banks from long ago.
London's river, broad with dignity
Washes embankments, high stone walls.

Under bridges, tall and noble,
Gardens and palaces left behind.
Passing places where docks once stood,
Now covered with homes designed for the rich.
Winding, turning to pass the Tower,
Flags and tourists, bands and blare,
Battleship Belfast, on past Greenwich,
Cutty Sark masted, Palace and Park.

Past the barrier
No floods now
Must keep the water
In its bed
Strong enough here
To keep it back
But one day, perhaps,
Who knows?

Now the river runs broad and long through dockyards,
Salt, dirty, tidal through old sailing place,
Memories of mariners, press gangs and pirates,
Lingering wrecks on the deep, muddy shores.

Fields and fens again, ducks and geese,
Fish in the water, waves and sand,
Seaside towns, with burgers and chips,
Funfairs and frolics, Kiss me Quick!

The river takes no note of them, it runs out to the sea,
Rejoicing in its freedom, it bids goodbye to me.

Di Sorrill

Past Reflective

(*After trying on a hat in BHS*)

Look in the mirror and what do I see?
I see my old mother looking at me.
Look in the mirror and take off the hat.
Thank God for that, it's my own face back.
In the light of day or the black of the night
Age sneaked up like the apple-tree's blight.

Anne Dunford

The Gull

She stood, alone, white on the shore
The surf rolled,
Skies darkened,
Gathering clouds met and fused.
Still she stood as heavy drops fell.
Slowly, slowly, then as heaven opened her gates
The surf angered, and as if to challenge
Roared her defiance at this shattering.
She quivered a little and flexed her feet,
Then, feeling she had no right in this conflict
She rose majestically, slowly, rhythmically –
her wings beat,
And she sought peace in the safety of the cliff.

Doreen Saunders

Cairnsmore of Fleet, or The Magic Mountain

(T*wo thousand, three hundred and thirty-one feet,*
the vital statistics of Cairnsmore of Fleet)

Slumped like some vast, exhausted beast,
you fill the eastern sky;
Magic mountain, near enough to touch on blue-sky days,
Sharp-etched, demure, benign,
Your gentle slopes, your grassy, whale-backed summit
Amenable to climb, drawing visitors and local folk alike
By means of friendly path right to your top,
And once aloft, to linger there and lunch;
And turned towards the north, admire the range
Of other mountains set in serried ranks,
Or facing south, espy the silver sheen
Of sinuous, snaking river, seaward bent.
To east, a view of forestry and moorland,
To westward far below, the little town
Midst chequered fields and woods.

Magic mountain, near enough to touch on blue-sky days
Yet vanishing from sight in cloud or rain,
Disappearing utterly from view,
But lurking, undetected, unsuspected…
Perhaps this is your truer, darker self
Accounting for the host of hapless aircraft
That through the years have foundered on your flanks?
Eleven crashes is your current tally,
From German Heinkel bomber homeward bound
To U.S. fighter's fatal training flight,
Your death toll etched in brass plaque near your cairn.

Eleven such, in less than forty years,
Since when, like a volcano dormant-seeming,
You've shown your guileless face -
Biding your time?

Tony Brotherton

/Er/

"/er/" he said,
Eyebrow raised, non-committal.
"What /er/?" I asked,
his shoulders shrugged.
So…..

/er/ as in
"I don't know the answer"?
Or /er/ as in
"I've made a mistake."
Or /er/ as in
'er indoors, the wife?
Or /er/ as in
'air on yer 'ead?
Or /er/ as in
Heir to your money?
Or – deep breath of anticipation –
The air that we breathe??

This last gives birth to all before –
Er, without it we die?
To err in its composition
Would kill us.
'Er indoors thrives on it
to nag him about pollution.
'Air on our
'Eads needs air to grow –
well witness those bald Martians.
And heirs inherit when we
Cease to draw on it.
So….. air….. what can I say?
But thank God it's there!

Elizabeth Duncann

But an' Ben

Hoo big's a but an' ben?
Why's it ca'ed a but an' ben?
Ah remember readin' aboot they Broons frae the
Sunday Post
They went thur holidays tae a but an' ben.

Hoo cud they aw fit innit?
Ah widda thote ye cud hardly get Maw, Paw and the
weans in wan
Faur less the rest o them as weel.

Mebbe but an' bens ur like Dr Who's Tardis
An ye cud get a bus loada folk inna but an' ben
Aw wi' thur en' suite lavvys.
Mebbe it's whit ye ca' poetic licence
Or jist poetic lies.

Ah think ye coodny get mair than two inna but an' ben
Withoot an awfy squeeze.
Ye'd haurdly huv room tae sneeze
Faur less swing a cat.

Ah think Ah'll no bother goin' tae a but an' ben
Ah think Ah'll jist go tae a nice wee B & B
An' get a fry-up fur ma breakfast fur a week.

Roll oan the Glesga Ferr!

Helen Macdonald

Imagination

The choice of theme 'imagination'
Two weeks I've suffered sheer frustration
Trying to put such words to rhyme
That my aching brain cells bring to mind
Contemplation did the trick
Through the many moments seeming dense and thick
I gave in not to sweet temptation
That momentarily brought hesitation
As I sat in deliberation… brought on by
Annoyance and irritation
My tired mind worked hard and long
Proving brain activity was not that strong
That bringing forth imagination
Takes discipline and determination
But…
Success at last – deliver-ation
A lightning flash of inspiration
As my tired mind from contemplation
Brought forth the necessary information
An end at last to irate frustration
Now I have cause for celebration
Happiness and appreciation
As I taste the joy of exhilaration
Which does NOT come with limitation
What I have learned from this week's theme,
Is NOT to be heard but only seen
When choice of theme comes round again,
The choice is yours... my literary friends

Bea Cumming

A Line in me Head

I went to bed with a line in me head,
And as the cold dark night grew longer
The line in me head as I lay in me bed
Got bigger and bigger and stronger
It grew into a sentence, getting bigger all the time
Then it doubled twice within itself and turned into a rhyme

Now the rhyme got pretty jolly as it stretched itself ahead
The words they intermingled till it turned into a bed
The bed looked oh so comfy that the line got really tired
Jumped into the bed itself, got mixed up with the wire
Now the wire, he loved the little line that was the rhyme
inside me head
But the rhyme that was the line did not,
he loved sentences instead
So he grew and grew until at last a paragraph became
And oh he was so happy then
because they looked the same.
But then the paragraph grew bored
and wanted more from life
And so he dumped the little line, and got itself a wife
For a time they were so happy,
then the wife she wanted more
So she asked the line to come back home
and help her do the chores
Now the little line was happy and the paragraph was too
The wife then had some commas and into a story grew
So now the line had many friends
to play with day or night
Whoever thought that such a tale
could ever turn out right
So if ever you are sitting with a line inside your head
Put it down on paper then send it off to bed.

Bea Cumming

Flight to Nowhere

I am no one
I have no home
No country.

Once we had friends
Neighbours
Why were we singled out?

My father ran
My brothers ran
I ran
But there was nowhere
To run to.

I am like a shell
You hold to your ear
And hear the sea
But it is not the sea
That I hear

I am like a husk
An ear of corn
Left winnowed and broken

I am no one
But I am not NOBODY
I am a WITNESS.

Barbara Holland

Fear

Fear gnaws at a fragile self-confidence,
With nameless menace peopling the darkness;
Taut with the terror of half-glimpsed threatenings
The mind recoils from its murky blackness.
Lurking in the shadows, grim shapes stalking,
All the more potent from being unseen –
Prepare an assault on their unarmed prey.
Fear in the half-light, the twilight the gloom
And fear in the depths of human loneliness,
Fear in a world uncaring, unconcerned,
Fear the ember in all relationships
Ready to blaze and leave only ashes.
Fear to torment, to startle, to petrify
Fear life's leitmotif, insistent, untamed.

Barbara J. Jefferies

Heat

Tropic of Cancer
Tropic of Capricorn
Between them lies the heat of the world
Dangerous heat
Tropical heat
The Torrid Zone

Pale Northerner in his wintry den
Dreams by his flickering log fire
(Courtesy of the Gas Board)
Holiday brochures scattered
On carpeted floors.

Dreams of Tropical Islands
Lush jungle, exotic fruits
Glistering black skins
And the heat – always the heat

A week, ten days will be enough
For him to be an expert
Bore his friends
With his Tropical tales.

Appeals from Third World charities
Drop through his letterbox
And lie unread.

Not for him the scenes of genocide
Boy soldiers taught to kill
The desperation and the hunger
The Aids virus

Switching channels
He turns to his photographs
Of lush Islands, Tropical forests
Remembers how he luxuriated
In the heat
And Smiles.

Barbara Holland

Cats

She remembers the coolness of temples in Egypt,
Slaves fearfully watching her every mood.
Soft chanting of priests down corridors dim-lit
And disdainfully glares at that tin of cat food.

The old ginger tom, now scarred with ears bitten
Staggering home from his night on the tiles,
Ensorcelled; his mistress still sees a sweet kitten,
Lovingly greets him with food and soft smiles.

Oh hold up your glasses of milk to these felines,
For aeons they've ruled us, but treated us fair.
If you want to be master you'd better go canine,
Or turn up the heat and get out of their chair.

E. Plumridge

APPLE BLOSSOM IN SPRING

Pink it is, pink and white
Silver by the moon at night
Scented gently like the Spring
Birds are there, heads under wing.

There they sit, arms linked in love
Fluttered by a feathered dove
Exchanging that romantic kiss
A thing no maid should ever miss.

But blossom fades and petals fall
And Love's romance now not there at all
But apples rosy, red and green
Are all that's left that can be seen.

I like the taste of apples – me
And think that I would rather see
Them lying on a pretty plate
Than kissing like we did of late.

Winter comes, the snowflakes drop
Young lovers must enjoy their sop
The apple tree is dark and bare
Was that romance ever there?

Di Sorrill

Childhood Fears

There was a china doll whose brown eyes
opened when you sat her up, and closed –
glock! – when you laid her down.
Somehow a piece at the top of her head –
stiff fabric, with yellow hair sewn on –
had come loose and you could open it
like a little door, and see the weights that controlled
her eyes – a scary compulsion.
At the top of the dark stair, on a small landing,
a stuffed barn owl under a glass dome
perched watchful on a pedestal, bobbing up
like a ghost as you climbed.
And halfway up the garden, behind the currant bushes,
there was sometimes a wolf hiding,
so that one turned back
on the way to the privy with the three-hole seat
and squatted furtively in the yard.
As for the man who switched from jovial parent –
glock! – to sudden violent rage, there was no way
to know the secret mechanism of his anger,
no refuge till the storm had passed.

Amy Baumann

Vagabond

A fugitive from my birth-land, I fled north,
Seeking the ends of the earth.
"Left! Left!" insisted the voices,
So I turned from my original flightpath.

Soft, rolling hills calmed me.
Tantalising glimpses of sea encouraged me, onwards,
Until the bays before and beside me –
Glorying silver blue in the sunshine –
Washed over my soul.

And the hills, rounded and sheltering,
Called me "On! On!"… so I continued.
At the Rhins I ran out of land,
So I stayed, and was gradually healed
Until my frantic flight was but a dream.

Then, slowly, I backtracked,
Seeing this beautiful land with new eyes;
Seeing in it my shelter, my strength… and my future.

So, Vagabond, rest you awhile
In this magic land
And be healed, too.

Elizabeth Duncann

Just Write Me a Poem

"A poem," he said, "Just write me a poem,
A poem to put in the book.
"We've got quite a few
Still need one or two
To ensure folks will all take a look.

It's not easy, you know, just sitting to write,
Put your thoughts and ideas down on paper.
So what shall it be
A poem about me?
Now! That's just too long a caper.

So instead, I'll just say "Turn the pages to see
Just what all the others have written.
Poems long, poems short,
Comic, deep full of thought,
And who knows, perhaps you'll get smitten."

Joyce Adkin

Bottle of Comfort

Oh, I wine and I dine, and go out with ladies,
Myself to the whole world I hide.
And for each one to serve, I hold back in reserve
My bottle of comfort inside

I talk to the trees and the animals see
What dilemmas such traps set for me
But all thoughts and actions find pleasure in turn
From my bottle of comfort in me

Oh, I try all the while to live life in the style
To which each of my 'cares' have me do
But each time do I find, that my hand and my mind
Get such comfort from my bottled brew

Through the long bitter days and the cold icy nights
Do I think of my love waiting there
Can I stand by and take, or will time cause heartache
Oh dear bottle – I really do care

But no answers arrived while I try and survive
And the problems grow larger each day
But I'm hurting myself as each time from the shelf
The bottle comes quickly my way

So instead of inside all my worries to hide
I must take each one, all on its own
And with clear mind decide with my conscience as guide
And leave the wee bottle alone

Or else time along I'll grow weak from the strong
As my drinking becomes troubled too
By prevention I can become self – me the man
Oh It would be a nice thing to do

The Decision is made – I have spoken – it is said
From now on I am free, 'No More Booze'
Now each problem I'll take and good future will make
After just one more drink……I can't lose!

Bea Cumming

The Other Side of the Mountain

Standing still alone, contemplating
Every sense stirred
Gazing, staring, seeking a glimpse
Beyond the summit.
Delving, plumbing the deeps,
An image of the flora.

Amber-glowing Autumn molinia
Ablaze, despite the dull day.
Pale yellow, green rosette,
Proud purple flower spike of butterwort
Sundew snapping a midge meal.

Aromatic midge-deterring bog-myrtle
The mountain turns inward,
Seeking to connect with its past,
Scrub? Rowan, alder, birch, Scots pine,
Sorbus, alnus, betula, pinus sylvestri.

Jenny Gustafson

Farming the Wind

In the cool upland air
The wind-farms reach to the sky
Searching out the four winds
Seeking out the Northerlies
The bitter cold Easterlies
Farming the wind.
Clean in line and form
Arresting and beautiful

In the dank river valleys below
The factories still stand,
Relics of an industrial age
An infamous past.
Nightmares of heat and noise and steam
Of roaring furnaces and clattering mills.

The short lives of the acolytes
Who tended them
Their epitaphs in crumbling churchyards
Deep-cut on blackened stone
Stand neighbourly in death.
As they did in life.

Do some poor ghosts
Stray up there in the evening?
Marvelling at the brave new world
They never knew.

Barbara Holland

Solitary Being

Alone,
As usual.
Although, *if*
Asked, I'd
Accept
An invitation to
Accompany me.

Solitary –
Swamped by
Scores of
Smiling couples,
Sharing
Space and time.

Wanting a
Word of kindliness in a
World of loneliness.
Wishing for a
Wonderful friend –
Waiting.

At last,
After walking
And looking
And eating in yet another barren place
Aching, I go home,
Alone.

(After divorce, in a new area, miles from old friends.)

Elizabeth Duncann

Complicity

I said my uncle George from Australia was coming,
we were to climb the Wrekin that afternoon
and could I go home at dinner-time?
Plumbing the candour of my hazel eyes,
the teacher said there should have been a note, but yes, I could.
I hurried home, a puny infant powered by glee,
kicking my buttocks as I pranced away –
the Wrekin not the chalky classroom – and my Mam
would be so glad, she loved the climb.

I found her bent double over the wash-tub,
thumping the dirt out of my Dad's overalls with the dolly;
sheets in the bricked-in copper fogging the air;
clothes already squeezed through the wooden rollers
of the mangle waiting to be taken to the line.
One strand of black hair had strayed from the plaited coils
each side her head; she straightened up, thrust it away
with the back of her cockled hand, and looked at me,
wiping the crafty triumph from my face.

When at long last the clothes had all been lugged
in their wicker basket to dance on the lines at the end
of our long garden, she made a cup of tea
and we had a slice from a new white loaf
spread with bright red shop-bought jam
(far superior, I thought, to home-made stuff
made with crab-apples and brambles).
We even went a little walk, just as far as
the grassy slag-heaps of the abandoned mines,
and returning, met the teacher pedalling home
bolt-upright on her bike.
"And what d'you think you'll tell *her* tomorrow?" asked my Mam.
"I'll say he didn't come." "Well that at least is true!"
And for a moment, I thought I saw her grin.

Amy Baumann

Materfamilias

Born 1889 on the 14th of December,
My loved and treasured 'Nanny' for as long as I remember,
Grace Augusta Chaddock was my mother's mother's name,
From Dorsetshire her family originally came.
Large families were common then and she was one of ten,
The man she was to marry also one of ten children.
She wasn't 'educated', as we'd recognise today,
Though wealth of worldly wisdom more than set her on her way.
Dressmaker to Queen Mary (spouse of George the Sailor King),
And fashion plate herself, as Grandpa was fond of telling.
Life then was quite a struggle and the marriage sometimes fraught,
But they stayed together through it with contentment dearly bought.
They lived through both world wars
though Nanny lost a much-loved brother,
And raised five children –
three my uncles, one my aunt and one my mother!
And she and Grandpa died within three months of one another.
In latter years Nan's sight declined, she went blind in the end,
But always to the last was my indomitable friend;
A fine example to the child as also to the man -
A real materfamilias was my adoring Nan.

Tony Brotherton

Legs

Slim ankles -
Shapely calves -
Rounded knees -
Silken thighs -

Heaven's above!

Tony Brotherton

My Cats

Cats have allowed me to provide for them for years:
Singly, and in multiples, they would arrive,
Gracing me with their presence (and Vet bills),
'Til their time to leave came…..
(Don't dwell on these occasions).

Remember only their uniqueness,
Their warm, snugly bodies seeking my lap, my chair, my bed...
Their aloofness and mystery,
Always keeping part of themselves *apart*.

Remember their trust – gracious gift, priceless.
Their conversations; their comfort – given
Always at exactly the right time,
Appearing on cue from God knows where.

Remember the soft, vibrating bodies curled on or next to me.
Their ecstasy as I caressed them;
Their rapture as I found the right spot on their ears;
The third eyelid closing in utter bliss.

Remember how *they* could block out the World –
Could put all thoughts not of *that* moment
Completely and utterly out of mind.
Remember how each cat took time to enjoy the *now*.

Cats have allowed me to provide for them for years –
And have, each in their turn provided well for *me*.
I have been blessed with trust when humans only betrayed me;
Love, when humans abused me:
Physical affection and emotional support when humans abandoned me.
Ah! My cats! I'll dwell on those memories.

Elizabeth Duncann

Dressy

Barbara Bering
Insisted on wearing
Clothes of a brilliant hue!
Rich purple pants
Of a startling satin,
Bra of a brilliant blue.
A petticoat yellow
Of a shade not mellow,
And tights very spirited, too.
As for her dresses,
Consistently messes
So tight that she couldn't draw breath,
Strained round her nethers,
Her neck trimmed with feathers,
Her waist pinched in like a wasp.
Underpinning elastic
Of tightness quite drastic,
Pneumatically hoisting her bust,
And constraining her seating,
Most movement defeating,
But awfully daring
Of Barbara Bering!

Di Sorrill

Thoughts from the Orkneys

Space, peace,
Endless sea, open sky
And landlocked Scapa Flow.
Hoy, Lyness Naval Cemetery;
My Grandfather's grave
"B. A. Russell, 35 years, died December 1915"
And red fuchsia growing as it did
In my Grandmother's garden on the Isle of Wight
Where his two young daughters played.

The black night sky
Studded with a thousand stars,
And I thought of another lonely grave.
In Leipzig, my brother-in-law.
Twenty years old, lost with the rest of the crew,
And another young wife to weep – and a mother to mourn.
I saw the news that night.
Young boys brandishing their guns,
High on violence they live – and die,
And their mothers weep.

Eileen Plumridge

Snapshots of Snoopy

i) Snoopy on the Road

Her slender form supports an outsize pack
containing clothes and cooking gear and tent
With bedroll balanced crosswise like a yoke
above her shoulders; all the worldly goods
It seems she'll need throughout her year in Spain.
The metronomic motion of her legs
clocks up the endless miles of dusty road
As on and ever on she wends her way,
with staff in hand, complete with scallop-shell
Proclaiming her a pilgrim (pocket-sized!)
I follow as we measure out the miles,
still not quite believing that I'm here,
That I've been favoured to spend time with her,
to share her life, her load.

Already I feel loath to leave here when my time is up,
Her destinations when my Spanish sojourn's through
Vicarious experience via her texts.

ii) Snoopy by the Sea

It's an enduring image that I have of her:
she sits cross-legged near the water's edge
Upon some beach in Scotland or in Spain
- in Galloway or else Galicia;
Clad only in her shorts and blousy top,
or hunched up snugly in her saffron fleece,
Whilst gazing out to sea, communing with some deity perhaps,
some force unknown,
Or pondering, on what I cannot guess.
Motionless, she stares across the ocean,
whilst I, the wistful watcher on the shore,
Long to pervade (though not invade) her thoughts,

to be as one with her - but feel constrained,
Because she left my side to sit alone.

After a while she rises, walks back up the beach
and flashes me a reassuring smile
That says, 'I'm all yours now!'

iii) Snoopy Unannounced

There comes a sudden knock at my back door,
along with cheery shout; and once again
That much-missed figure's beaming on the step,
re-entering my life out of the blue,
After a gap of weeks, as is her wont;
The momentary hug, the "I can't stop",
(more than a milky coffee takes to drink)
Before this pocket-dynamo departs
and life resumes its dreary monotone
After the flash of gold her visit brings.

I deprecate the way that she arrives
without a moment's notice, catching me
Quite unprepared to welcome her in style,
the way her status merits; more than that,
I dread the time when she won't come at all.

Tony Brotherton

Thoughts

I often sit and wonder, whence comes a single thought
From where an idea may be born
That answers questions sought

What starts a question in the mind,
That probes the depths of time
Why do we search beyond ourselves
When the answer's in our mind

For all is very simple if the truth we seek to know
A thought is born of heaven
And it's love that makes it grow

The ring of truth surrounds each heart
Which lights up with inspiration
To raise the soul to God on high
In love and exaltation

Never be afraid to search…
No stone is left unturned
For as one travels through their life
A lesson there is learned

Each question that is answered,
Then another takes its place
And so we gain the knowledge,
Then wisdom comes with age

And as we each make progress,
While we analyse and probe
We finally come to terms with life
Within this earthly globe

Bea Cumming

I'm on a Diet Aren't I

Now
Oxtail soup is my delight
Thick and luscious and rich
A soup that shows its taste and might
And quality of pitch.
Let's have some of that , shall we?

Then how about steak and kidney pud
With the meaty flavour that says the lot
A wholesome meal that surely would
Beat all the dishes, cold or hot.
Let's have some of that, shall we?

Now, how about roly-poly steamed
Dripping with treacle and custard
Thick and spoon-clinging, it is deemed
To be the confectioner's mustard!
Let's have some of that, shall we?

For afters, those fluffy biscuits would please
The ones that make flakes that tickle
With a slice of Gorgonzola cheese
And a spoonful of Branston pickle

Let's have some of that, shall we?

Coffee and chocolates?
I think that'll do.
Don't you?
Ooh!

Di Sorrill

Body Parts

If your body-parts are failing or if they've already gone -
I've something that may suit you
That's second-*ish* to none.

While out in town the other day
I beheld a marv'lous sight!
A sign leapt out and grabbed me
And I'm sure I read it right.

'BODY PARTS!' it shouted
In letters red as blood.
'HALLELUYAH!' I responded,
'A shop to do me good.'

The traffic-jam grew longer
But I heeded not at all;
I dreamed of what I'd purchase
To make me strong and tall.

Fingers slim and elegant
And wrists that were not weak;
And shoulders that were normal,
That didn't lock and creak.

A sinuous spine that freely bends
And a neck that can rotate;
A hip that glides and swivels
And never more will grate.

A nice new knee would do me,
And a reconstructed foot,
With ankle once more shapely
That fits inside a boot.

A sudden loud cacophony
Awoke me from my dream
As the driver stuck behind me
Let out a threatening scream.

So I couldn't stop to check it out
To see if it were true -
But I hope so much it is -
Why! I'd be as good as new!

Elizabeth Duncann

Freedom

The dark and hidden corridors of my mind are many
The twists and turns are few
But one step in the wrong direction
Makes one so confused
At times I've trodden down these paths
Lonely, lost, misused
Dark distrustful thought for company
What was I to do

No more the moon's dark do I seek for solace
The sun's bright light now seeps
Night's dark and shaded cloak of darkness
Now can lift – protection free
I am of the sun's sweet child of brightness
Light is me
See me as I am, sweet birth, as from past crusts
Am burden freed
I come as God intended
To make my peace – with thee!

Bea Cumming

The Journey

(Narrator)

A journey I would like to make
Please come along; and I will take you
To the home of one so dear
Mother, and her memories hear
Listen to the thoughts that roam
Listen well, she's coming home.

(Old lady)

I'm old and tired here on my own
My family lost; my children grown
Yet, I am happy all the while
For all that's changed is my lifestyle.

The wheel outside the house going round
While I listen to the whirring sound
Of water trickling as it falls
Into the stream below, that calls

My little home now old with time
Creaks and moans like bones of mine
But sounds of age bring comfort, so
Reminding me of long ago.

I sit here in my rocking-chair
And feel cool breezes through my hair
With summer warmth I drift to sleep
Bringing to life those memories deep

I have so many thoughts in mind
These have not altered with the time
The house with children's laughter ringing
The muffled sighs while father's singing

The many walks through forest green
The different kinds of flowers seen
The picnics far upon the hill
And the evening scent when life was still

Oh it seems so very long ago
You waved while off to war did go
In uniform so tall and proud
Not knowing then t'would be your shroud

The bitter days they came, they went
The months and then the years were spent
The children grew; then all left home
Yet. I was never quite alone

For as I look around, I see
The seeds we planted now are trees
The fence you built around our home
Though standing, now with age has worn.

And then there's Tibbs, our tabby cat
Who used to curl up on the mat
Next to your slippers; as if he knew
That they were all he had of you

Yes I have many memories sweet
To me, their living thought I keep
I've never really let you go
For so long have I loved you so

What's this; my eyes deceive me now
I could have sworn you just sat down
So proud and handsome; still the same
It's funny how old minds play games

For though I've dreamed of you before
This differs from the ones before
You seem so real; how can this be
Oh my sweet love – please stay with me.

(Narrator)

And so dear friends, while we have seen
The treasured memories of the life that's been
This sweet old soul whose thoughts we've shared
We leave them now without a care
And as the sun sets through the trees
We say farewell to memories
A smile lays sweet upon the face
Of peace that leaveth not a trace
Of silent death that passed this night
To let two souls of love unite -
To start their heavenly life anew
And memories fade; for me and you

Bea Cumming

Comparatively Speaking

All sorts of upward things are heights!
I think about them in the nights.
The hillock raised by a nest of ants
Dragging up sand by the seat of their pants
Is as big as the height we call a tor,
(Or if they're termites, rather more)

Comparatively speaking

Or our dear little hills round the Wigtown Bay
Those beautiful heights we see every day,
Are just dainty ant-hills against the Andes
Certainly not competitive handies
And those highbrow hills called the Himalayas
Put to shame those belonging to the Mayas

Comparatively speaking

For a hundred yeas planes fly higher yet
From humble biplane to soaring jet
And rockets roar into the sky
As far as the moon – I'm not sure why!
And satellites float round and round the earth
One of the highest things given birth

Comparatively speaking

But comets and asteroids, stars and sun
Are the highest things our Gods have done!

Comparatively speaking!

Di Sorrill

Old Mill

Old mill...
Brooding, silent
And forgotten.
Your stones,
No more to turn
Are tossed aside
To lie like pebbles in the grass,
Your roof,
Once like a head held high,
Lies sad upon the floor.
A carpet rich
Of green and gold
Now hides your crumbling soul.
Your tirl,
Which made the waters dance,
A sad and broken thing.
No waters rush...
For yellow iris stands.
Grieve not, old mill
For days past gone,
Your work was not in vain.

Doreen Saunders

The Life That Might Have Been

Oh! For the life that might have been;
The places unvisited, faces unseen.
Swapped instead for these four walls.
Nappies, bottles, bats and balls.

Oh! For the person locked within,
Confined in this image bland and grim;
The real me, the id, ego, sum –
Oh dear God! What have I become?

I long to be lovely, lithe and lean;
My hair to be dark with shimmer and sheen,
Designer clothes in just my style;
Cool, calm, collected all the while.

Instead, in the mirror, there I stand
Clutching my life by one sticky hand.
Trembling, uncertain, my soul shines through.
What else but love can a mother do?

(*Early days as a parent!*)

Elizabeth Duncann

Owls

Silent shapes slip across the sky,
Swoop on unsuspecting prey.
Ghostly images against the dark
Fading with light of new day.

Large eyes, all-seeing.
Keen ears all-hearing.
Sharp claws, all holding.
Hungry chicks, all waiting.

Silent shapes slide across the sky,
Rest awhile on billboard sign.
Knowing eyes, wise and watching,
Fix their beady stare on mine.

Large wings, uplifting;
Smooth body, air gliding.
White ghost sliding away
And gone.

(Late-night dog-walk near an industrial estate where Man had imposed himself on Nature).

Elizabeth Duncann

Unit 3 Poetry

We originally met in a comfortable room above Dowling Stoves in Unit 3 at Bladnoch Bridge Estate, hence our name, which we have kept. We have continued to meet about twice a month in Wigtown or its environs ever since.

We welcome new members, whether they write, recite or merely appreciate poetry.

One of our members, Ian Wood, designed the front cover of this booklet



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